

## Teacher Organizes Democratic Election



Photo: USAID/Ben Barber

“With \$800 financial help from USAID, I was able to rent vehicles, provide food for election workers, buy stationery and other basics – the U.S. help was very important for carrying out the election.”

- Schoolteacher Salim Mohammad Ali

In a quiet village a few miles from this Southern Iraqi city, Nasiriyah, schoolteacher Salim Mohammad Ali organized his town’s first democratic council elections with U.S. financial assistance helping him with basic expenses.

The town of 35,000 people had been run for years by Baath Party officials appointed by Saddam Hussein’s government, which held elections in which “there was no choice” other than the Baath candidates, Ali said. After the collapse of the Saddam regime in April, the town was left in a power vacuum. Baath party officials fled and a few people simply declared themselves to be the new council.

“But their behavior was not correct, there was corruption and there was conflict among the political parties so I thought I could solve it.”

Four days after the Sept. 18 election, the 10 new council members were setting up their new administration which is expected to remain in place until a new Iraqi government is formed and new government structures and election systems are set up. The election took place with a small amount of U.S. assistance which was supplied by USAID working with the Coalition Provisional Authority.

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